

United States Department of Interior

Bureau of Reclamation
Mid-Pacific Region
Sacramento, California

FINAL
Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

**“One-Year Project for the Sale of Water from the Sacramento
Groundwater Authority (SGA) and its Member Agencies to the
CALFED Environmental Water Account (EWA)”**

Recommended By:

Environmental Water Account Program Manager

Concur:

Regional Environmental Officer

Approved By:

Acting Regional Resources Manager

Date:

FONSI Number:

FINAL FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

“One-Year Project for the Sale of Water from the Sacramento Groundwater Authority (SGA) and its Member Agencies to the CALFED Environmental Water Account (EWA)”

BACKGROUND

The CALFED EWA focuses in large part on resolving the fishery/water diversion conflict at the Central Valley Project (CVP) and State Water Project (SWP) export pumps because, in recent years, these diversions have suffered great fluctuations, adversely affecting water supply reliability due to conflicts with fishery needs. The EWA has been established to provide water for the protection and recovery of fish beyond water available through existing regulatory actions related to the CVP/SWP operations. The EWA is a cooperative management program whose purpose is to provide protection and restoration to the fish of the San Francisco Bay, Sacramento and San Joaquin/Delta (Bay-Delta) estuary through environmentally beneficial changes in the CVP/SWP operations at no uncompensated water costs to the CVP/SWP water users and no net increased incremental cost upon the CVP/SWP. This approach to fishery protection requires the acquisition of water (or “EWA assets”), which will be used to augment stream flows and Delta outflow, to modify exports to provide fishery benefits, and to replace the water supply interrupted by changes in CVP/SWP operations.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), collectively the “Management Agencies”, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), collectively the “Project Agencies”, entered into the Environmental Water Account Operating Principles Agreement (Operating Principles) as described and attached to the Record of Decision (ROD) for the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. Reclamation agreed to cooperate with the Management Agencies in administering the EWA, including the acquisition of EWA assets through use of operational flexibility and purchases, banking, borrowing, and conveyance of EWA assets, and making the operational changes proposed by the Management Agencies. The purchase of 185,000 acre-feet of water each year from willing sellers is needed as part of the suite of EWA assets necessary to compensate for EWA actions and to have a fully operational EWA. Having an operational EWA allows the Project Agencies to provide a commitment that there will be no reductions, beyond existing regulatory levels, in CVP or SWP Delta exports resulting from measures to protect fish under the Federal and State Endangered Species Acts (ESAs).

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

Reclamation proposes to enter into an agreement with SGA to purchase up to 10,000 acre-feet of surface water from Folsom Lake and the lower American River on behalf of the EWA. The purchased water will be made available by SGA's member agencies through extraction of an equivalent quantity of groundwater from the basin underlying Sacramento County north of the American River for delivery and consumptive use by their users during March 1, 2002 through November 15, 2002.

Reclamation will release 10,000 acre-feet of water from Folsom Lake under a schedule designed to meet downstream EWA objectives during 2002. This involves minor changes in the operation of Folsom Lake to account for the 5,000 AF of water made available for transfer by the San Juan Water District. As part of the San Juan Water District's portion of the proposed action, Reclamation will conduct an independent review and approval process for this transfer of CVP contract service water, as required by Federal Reclamation laws. The potential impacts resulting from this transfer are evaluated in the attached Environmental Assessment (EA)/Initial Study (IS). Reclamation will release the 5,000 AF of water at the request by the EWA Management Agencies on a schedule designed to provide instream fisheries benefits and meet the needs of the EWA. This amount of water represents about one-half of one percent of the maximum storage volume of Folsom Lake.

The forbearance of water by the City of Sacramento, either at the diversions to the E.A. Fairbairn Water Treatment Plant or the Sacramento River Water Treatment Plant, will not have an effect on Folsom Lake operations. Folsom Lake will be operated normally, but water that otherwise would be diverted by the City of Sacramento will be allowed to flow into the lower Sacramento River and Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta where it will be exported at either the CVP or SWP pumping plants in a manner consistent with all regulatory requirements and the EWA Operating Principles.

FINDING

Reclamation has found that the purchase and management of up to 10,000 AF of water from SGA and its Member Agencies would not result in any significant adverse impacts on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

BASIS FOR FINDING

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is based on the following:

- a) The Project will not degrade environmental quality, reduce terrestrial habitat or significantly affect aquatic habitat.
- b) Reclamation, with concurrence of the USFWS and NMFS, made the determination that the Project would not likely have an adverse affect on Federally-listed endangered species in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

- c) The Project will not have impacts that are individually, or cumulatively significant because the action is limited to one year.
- d) The Project will not have environmental effects that will cause significant adverse effects on human beings (either directly or indirectly).
- e) No evidence exists that the Project will have a significant negative or adverse effect on the environment.

These findings are predicated on the fact that this action is essentially a re-operation/re-scheduling of existing water supplies in conformance with existing environmental requirements.